

GOAL V: Promote Civic Participation, Responsibility and Leadership Opportunities for Youth

Objective 1
Identify and publicize youth volunteer opportunities.

Objective 2
Partner with area school districts and organizations to promote youth volunteerism.

Objective 3
Enhance the community's capacity for recruiting and placing youth volunteers.

All children benefit from an opportunity to make a difference in their families, at schools and in their communities. Knowing how to make a difference comes from having models of caring behavior, awareness of the needs of others, a sense of personal responsibility to contribute to the larger society, and opportunities for volunteering, leadership and service.

Providing young people with opportunities to make a difference through service instills not only a sense of responsibility, but of possibility. Many young people want to be involved in making the world a better place; however, many youth lack meaningful opportunities to contribute.

This goal focuses on giving all children the chance to make a difference.

Objective 1 is to identify and publicize volunteer opportunities within the community so that youth can



become engaged and contribute to the success and well-being of their communities. Through volunteer experiences, youth can become more productive in their communities and schools, thereby improving their academic performance. This may translate into greater high school graduation and college participation rates.

Objective 2 is to partner with area school districts and other organizations to promote youth volunteerism. A strategic collaboration between schools, organizations, businesses and

the City is needed to fully connect youth with available opportunities. Youth engaged in these partnerships develop a greater understanding of the needs necessary to succeed in their future endeavors.

Objective 3 is to enhance the community's capacity for recruiting and placing youth volunteers. This includes promoting the role of community service as a means to helping children become responsible adults, as well as improving the ability to place volunteers with organizations through web-based technology.

For More Information Contact

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----- ARLINGTON YOUTH -----
STEADY BY 12 ... READY BY 18



This strategy is an outgrowth of organization and community work on the following City Council outcomes and priorities:

- Arlington is a place where people feel safe anywhere, all the time.
- Our community provides quality, affordable, cultural, learning and leisure opportunities for youth, families, and citizens of Arlington.
- Quality parks, facilities, and green spaces increase the attractiveness and desirability of Arlington.

Steady and Ready Youth

Introduction

Since 1997, America's Promise Alliance has been promoting a set of simple guiding principles or essential elements to set a foundation that youth need to become successful, independent and responsible adults. These principles, also known as the Five Promises, include: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, effective education and opportunities to help others. On January 24, 2008, the America's Promise Alliance recognized Arlington as one of the 100 Best Communities for Youth.

We believe a child needs this foundation by the age of 12 in order to successfully navigate junior high and high school so that, by the age of 18 they are ready to move on to college or other training and toward successful adulthood.



Challenges teens face:

- Gang activity – This can consist of crimes such as graffiti, theft, assault and murder. Gang members are typically recruited between the ages of 11 and 14.
- Drugs – Illegal drug use can cause serious physical and mental problems in users. It is extremely dangerous and can result in death.
- Alcohol – Its use can contribute to risky and dangerous behaviors in teens.
- Runaway youth – These children are susceptible to criminal activity and drug and alcohol abuse.
- Domestic violence – Youth can be the victims and/or perpetrators of violence in the home. This can consist of crimes such as threats, assaults and murder.
- Homelessness – A significant number of Arlington youth are homeless or living a transient lifestyle.
- Lack of medical care – Youth who go without medical care can suffer from illnesses and diseases that may be treated effectively with proper medicine.
- Lack of positive role models – These are important to encourage educational success.
- Peer pressure – This may lead to poor grades, higher potential for drop out as well as sexual and criminal activity.

It is our goal to support the implementation of the Five Promises in Arlington and ensure that action is taken to engage individuals, families and organizations toward a positive change in our community. We believe that Arlington's organizations that support youth need to collaborate to implement these Promises and make Arlington a stronger community. Organizations working together, implementing the Five Promises and utilizing this strategic theme will receive greater recognition for leveraging funding through various grant opportunities.



GOAL I: Encourage Positive Relationships Between Adults and Children

- Objective 1**
Educate and inform the public on the need for caring adults in order to increase the number of adult volunteers.
- Objective 2**
Link caring adults with organizations that serve the youth of the community.
- Objective 3**
Ensure that caring adults are properly trained by the organizations they serve.

All children need support and guidance from caring adults in their families, at schools and in their communities. These include ongoing, secure relationships with parents as well as formal and informal relationships with teachers, mentors, coaches, youth volunteers and neighbors.

Caring adults are the cornerstone of a child's development and for the other four Promises that build success both in childhood and adulthood. Parents come first. But children also need to experience the support from caring adults in all areas of their lives.

Caring adult volunteers are needed to mentor and positively impact the community's youth. Interaction with caring adults is especially important for youth who lack

positive role models and have low self esteem. Youth who are mentored by positive role models are more likely to be successful and less likely to be involved in undesirable behavior.

The focus of this goal is to encourage caring adults to invest their time in the community's youth.

Objective 1 is to educate and inform the public of the need for caring adults in order to increase the number of adult volunteers. It is important for the community to understand the impact just one volunteer can have on a child's life. Most citizens may not be aware of the issues and struggles youth deal with on a daily basis. A "call for action" would be the first step toward creating such awareness and engaging the community.

Objective 2 is to link caring adults with organizations that serve the youth of the community. Arlington has many noteworthy organizations serving the youth and community that need to be publicized and available to citizens on different levels. These organizations thrive through the dedication of volunteers, but need additional community support to accomplish their goals.

Objective 3 is to ensure that caring adults are properly trained by the organizations they serve. Organizations using adult volunteers must ensure the safety of the youth they serve. Organizations must train volunteers to handle difficult situations youth may encounter and know how to access resources to provide crisis intervention.

GOAL II: Ensure Access to Safe Places for Arlington Youth

- Objective 1**
Enhance Arlington's social environment through community involvement.
- Objective 2**
Provide safe places for youth to engage in physical fitness, sports and recreational opportunities.
- Objective 3**
Develop youth educational programs to promote safety, prevent injury and deter violence.

All children need to be physically and emotionally safe wherever they are. Youth witness more crimes today through home, school, media, television, video games and popular youth books so their exposure to violence is much greater than ever before. They also need a healthy balance between structured, supervised activities and unstructured time. It is important for children to be safe, but safe places alone are not enough. It is equally important for a child's development that these places engage them actively and constructively. Children must also feel safe with individuals and must know that there are trusted adults available for them to disclose emotional issues.

The Arlington Human Service Planners study on Child Abuse and Neglect suggests that Arlington has a greater percentage of children home alone than the rest of Tarrant County.


Objective 1 is to enhance Arlington's social environment through community involvement. This includes social and physical environments that are accessible, safe and promote healthy behaviors. Children need to have programs that teach them to grow socially as well as academically, to give them a sense of belonging and to improve their self esteem. The links between early intervention, early childhood education and school programs

need to be improved as well as shared by parents and teachers to increase students' achievement.

Objective 2 is to provide safe places for youth that promote physical fitness, sports, recreational and creative education opportunities. It is important for youth to have a sense of belonging within a safe environment. Youth need safe locations where they can be involved in healthy activities that promote overall well being and give them a voice in the activities they pursue.

Objective 3 is to develop youth educational programs that promote safety, prevent injuries and deter violence. This can be accomplished by integrating school, family and community efforts.

GOAL III: Promote Healthy Start Opportunities for Every Child

- Objective 1**
Arlington children are physically healthy.
 - Objective 2**
Arlington children are psychologically healthy.
 - Objective 3**
Arlington children participate in healthy behaviors.
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All children need and deserve healthy bodies, healthy minds and healthy habits. These conditions result from regular medical check-ups and appropriate treatment, good nutrition and exercise, and positive role models of physical and mental health.

Objective 1 is to ensure that all Arlington children are physically healthy. With increased attention on such issues as childhood obesity and juvenile diabetes, Americans have a raised awareness of the importance of a healthy start as a critical developmental component in a child's life. Nevertheless, nine million young people today remain without health insurance. Babies born in the U.S. are less likely to

survive until their first birthday than those in 27 other industrialized nations. Youth as well as parents need to be educated and given tools to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Objective 2 is to ensure that all youth are psychologically healthy. According to the America's Promise web site, one in 11 high school students attempt suicide, almost 80% of children feel stressed each month, and one in four say they feel stressed at least once each day.

It is important that families, teachers and the community are educated on mental health issues, available resources, and support groups for children and parents.

Objective 3 is to ensure that Arlington children participate in healthy behaviors.

Research shows that children who learn about the risks of drugs at home are up to 50 percent less likely than their peers to use drugs.

Healthy behaviors need to be promoted early in a child's development and reinforced throughout their childhood to ensure a continuation of healthy choices.

Publicity and collaboration between community organizations are needed to ensure families and youth have knowledge and access regarding the availability of these services.

GOAL IV: Provide Effective Education Opportunities for Children

- Objective 1**
Arlington supports quality learning environments within the community.
- Objective 2**
Arlington offers educational assistance and guidance opportunities.
- Objective 3**
Arlington offers mentoring opportunities.

All children need the intellectual development, motivation and skills that prepare them for successful employment and lifelong learning. These result from having quality learning environments, challenging expectations, and consistent guidance and mentoring.

In today's competitive global economy, effective education is more important than ever before. Yet more than 25% of American students do not finish high school. The figure is nearly twice as high for African American and Latino students.

Objective 1 states that Arlington supports quality learning environments within the community. Youth deserve to receive preparation and support that will ensure their success through high school. Arlington also believes it is important for graduating seniors to continue their education into college or a skill-based training center so they can become successful, independent and responsible adults.

Objective 2 states that Arlington offers educational assistance and guidance. Youth need outside assistance

for their education from sources other than the school district, such as, access to computers and tutoring. Youth need to be aware of the available resources that will support their education.

Objective 3 states that Arlington offers mentoring opportunities. It is essential for youth to see public and private organizations, including businesses, working together to provide resources and contacts with: character development, career counseling, internships and apprenticeships.